



Fuelling Fitness for Your Sport- Rugby League

About Rugby League

Rugby League is a popular Australian sport played by both professionals and amateurs. The competitive season runs from March to September with one game per week. Teams have 13 players including six forwards and seven backs. Forwards usually weigh between 90-110kg. They need to be heavier due to their involvement in the scrums and tackling. Backs usually weigh between 80-95kg. They need to be more agile and so tend to be smaller and leaner.

Matches have two forty minutes halves. During the game each player is likely to cover between 5-8km and be involved in 20 to 40 tackles. Most of the distance is travelled by walking or jogging but there are also bursts of high intensity sprinting and body contact. Training sessions include running, skill work and strength training.

Training Diet

The training diet of a Rugby League player should be;

- High in energy to help with muscle gain. Eating three meals and regular snacks everyday help to meet this goal.
- High in carbohydrate rich foods eg. breakfast cereal, bread, muffins, muesli bars, rice, pasta, potato, fruit, smoothies. These should form the basis for most meals and snacks. This will help with exercise performance, recovery from training and muscle gain.
- Moderate in protein rich foods eg. meat, chicken, fish, dairy products. There is no need to eat masses of extra protein to "bulk up". Low in fat. Avoid too much margarine, fatty meats, high fat takeaway and snacks, fried food and creamy sauces.
- Include fruit & veg. These are needed for preventing illness, building muscle and repairing injury.
- Minimal alcohol. Alcohol can lead to poor recovery, slow repair of injury and contribute to excess weight.

Fluid Needs

Rugby league players can lose several Litres of fluid during a game especially during the summer months. Dehydration will lead to poor concentration and coordination. Heat stroke is dangerous and can lead to death. It can be hard to drink enough fluid to make up for what is lost in sweat during training and competition.

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Tips to stay hydrated and keep cool

- Drink 250-500mls with every meal and snack - don't save it up until training. Aim to drink more than your thirst tells you to. Check your weight before and after training or competition (1 Kg lost = 1.5 Litres to replace)
- Good fluid choices - sports drink, water, fruit juice, cordial and milk. Sports drink has the added benefit of containing sodium (salt) which helps your body to retain the fluid.
- Poorer fluid choices- alcohol, cola drinks, tea, coffee and energy drinks. These are diuretics and will increase fluid loss in your urine. Soft drinks are gassy and filling making it difficult to drink enough.

What Should I Eat Pre-Event?

- Eat extra carbohydrate and drink plenty of fluid in the 24 hours before the game. This will give you the best chance of performing well.
- Have your last meal 3-4 hours before the game (eg, cereal and toast, pasta and red sauce) and a light snack 1-2 hours before (eg. banana roll and sports drink).
- Practice eating this meal before heavy training to work out what your stomach can tolerate.
- If you suffer from pre-game nerves or can't compete with a full stomach, try having nutritious drinks (eg. smoothies) or eat early and top up with small snacks or drinks closer to the game.

What Should I Eat/Drink During Competition?

- It is important to top up fluid levels and carbohydrate during a game to minimise fatigue and help concentration.
- Sip from a drink bottle during breaks in play and on the interchange bench. Don't spit it out.
- Drink some sports drinks in place of water as they top up carbohydrate and fluid.
- At half time, aim for 200-400mls of sports drink or water. Carbohydrate gels can give an added boost to energy.

What About Recovery?

Poor recovery after the game can lead to decreased energy during the following week of training. It can also slow down repair of injury. Drinking and eating for recovery is important to play at your best. Drinking and eating carbohydrate rich foods as soon as possible after the game will increase your rate of recovery.



Some Good Recovery Choices Include;

- sports drink
- banana roll
- jelly lollies
- sandwiches
- muffins
- tropical fruit

Other Nutrition Tips

- Try to have a snack containing protein and carbohydrate just before and just after weights sessions to maximise your muscle gain and recovery eg yoghurt, ham sandwich or Sustagen™.
- Injury is a fact of life in Rugby League and many other contact sports. Alcohol can make injuries worse by increasing swelling and bleeding. This means that it is best to avoid alcohol for the first 24-48 hours after an injury occurs.
- Although there are many supplements on the market many are expensive and have no proven benefit. Sports bars, sports drinks and liquid meals are a convenient way to top up energy levels especially if trying to gain weight. For more advice, see a sports dietitian.

How to Get Involved

For more information about Rugby League and how to get involved go to http://directory.google.com/Top/Sports/Football/Rugby_League/Australia/

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